YOGA AND MENTAL HEALTH: APPLYING YOGA PHILOSOPHY FOR WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Indian Philosophy is a term that refers to schools of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent. Over the ages there has been continuity in enlarge this filed of philosophical enquiry, which as lead to a wide range of scriptures and systems of philosophy. The Yoga School, which was founded by Patanjali, was closely allied with Samkhya, and accepts its epistemology and metaphysics it was introduced by Patañjali in the 2nd century BC. The Practice of Yoga as a discipline had been done since ancient times. However, since its alliance with the Samkhya, it tried to develop a specific philosophy of its own, which would be in harmony with the Samkhya Philosophy. Though the popular understanding of Yoga equates it with just the asanas, there are eight steps prescribed for its practice, which emphasize internal and external cleansing, self - discipline physical fitness, and meditation, which result in alertness and mental strength. Yoga as a term used for a system of abstract meditation or mental abstraction. Someone who practices yoga or follows the yoga philosophy with a high level of commitment is called a yogi or yogini. Virtually everyone can see physical benefits from yoga, and its practice can also give psychological benefits, such as stress reduction and a sense of well-being, and spiritual benefits, such as a feeling of connectedness with God or Spirit, or a feeling of transcendence. Mental stress is an important part of our life. It is the biggest challenge to live a life without stress and to continue with the peace of mind. In this paper it is an attempt to made the discuss yoga philosophy in present day intellectual world as well its application to maintain human well-being.

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Philosophy of Yoga:

"The word Yoga comes from a Sanskrit root which means "to go to trance, to meditate." Others however derive it from a root which means to join and Yoke in English is said to be the same word as Yoga. Both roots are feasible- in the case of the root to join, Yoga would mean the

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science that teaches the method of joining the human soul with God. The philosophy of Patanjali is essentially dualistic. The Jivas or Purusas or human egos are separate individual entities and exist from eternity; so is also Prakriti and so also Ishwara or God. It thus believes in there Eternal co-existent principles, the God, the Man and the Matter."[1] The famous phrase Astanga Yoga is an important part Yoga philosophy. In this five are sternal, as if, compared to last three. The eight angas are as given below:

1. Practice Yama or Restraint, i.e. be moral. This restraint or Yama consists of five sub-divisions- (a) does not kill or injure any being. Be kind to all. Ahimsa, (b) Speak and act truth; (c) Steal not, nor acquire illicit gains, (d) Practice continence and celibacy, (e) Be not avaricious. These are universal rules.
2. Niyama or Observance. This is also five-fold –(a) Be clean in body and mind, (b) Be contended, (c) Practice asceticism and austerity, (d) Study sacred books, Be devoted to God.
3. The third Anga of Yoga is Asana or Posture.
4. The fourth Anga of Yoga is the much abused Pranayama or regulation of breath.
5. The fifth Anga of yoga is Pratyahara or Abstraction.

All the above five are Baharanga or the external. The internal yoga which has to deal with the mind and mind also consists of the last three Angas- Dharna, Dhayana and Samadhi. When the stage of catalepsy is reached, the Yogi fixes his mind on any particular potion of his body. This holding the mind in a particular part is dharna or concentration. The continuation of the mental effort to keep the mind there is Dhyana or meditation. This meditation (Dhyana) turns into samadhi or contemplation when the Self is lost as if it were, the objects of meditation alone remains in the mind and shines out alone.[2]

In other words we can summarise Yoga as a spiritual effort to attain perfection through strict control of the body and the mind. This control to be effected by a special stem of physical culture and spiritual discipline. This was the mission of the Yoga.[3] The aim is to reach perfection through a state of ecstasy in which the soul or self- the 'I"-was completely separated from the surrounded physical world of reality.[4]

Yoga as a Part of India Psychology:

While defining Indian Psychology we can say that Psychology in the Indian Tradition is an 'inner discipline in search of realizing truth and perfection in the human condition. The goal is to

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find oneself in an unconditioned and unmasked state.[5] According to Neeltje Huppes, "The central Idea of Indian philosophy is that consciousness is the origin and base of manifestation. The ancient ages do not arrive at this knowledge by a strict mental reasoning and were not content with a mental idea. They discovered the foundation of their philosophical principles through a direct intuitive perception and inner experience. This is how, throughout the ages Indian thinkers considered philosophy to be connected to a practical spiritual discipline."[6]

Since Indian psychology is based on Indian philosophy it has developed many methods and techniques for experiencing consciousness in ourselves. "Indian psychology has its root in Indian Philosophy and shares its emphasis on knowing by experience. Through personal experience the achariyas (Teachers or mentors) worked out the philosophy in further details in psychological theories and applied these on themselves and their students. They found methods and processes for contacting the universal planes of consciousness form the lowest to the higher, and subsequently, studies how these planes manifest and interact in human nature. This is how Indian psychology can contribute to detailed understanding of cosmic principles and to an elaborate knowledge of psychological processes in the human being A core characteristics of Indian psychology is that it addresses the complete human beings-not only the body, heart and mind , but also soul and spirit."[7]

While talking about the methods of Indian psychology he again said, "Self-observation and self-enquiry are the main methods of self-development and self-perception in most of the systems of Indian Psychology. Amongst the systems that are presently known and practiced all over the world are Hatha yoga, Vipassana and the Kriya yoga of Patanjali. Integral psychology, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is a life-affirming synthesis of many systems. It has as its aim to express in the midst of life, in our thoughts, feelings and actions, our union with the Supreme or divine Consciousness."[8] So, we can see that in the present day discussion of Indian Psychology, we can find that Yoga Philosophy can be an important part of it. Further, "Yoga is a method of transcognitive states. Realization takes different forms relative to different dispositions of the seekers these include knowledge focuses jnana yoga to meet the thought needs, devotion-filled bhakti yoga to deal with one's passionate nature, and action oriented karma yoga for those dominated by the impulse to act. Thus, wisdom, worship and work are three distinct routes to self-realization"[9]

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Yoga and Stress Management:

Every person is suffering from stress today. The present day a socio-economic problem creates dilemma and psychological stress. When this stress continuously follows humans it developed a psychological disorder. The feelings of distrust, regret, sad emotions, emotional imbalance creates low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Isolation and lack of meaning towards life also give a hard punch to his personal and social life. Without meaning, life is wastage, futile and empty. All failures of life are a big challenge to human well-being.[10] "The Path of Yoga is based on sound psychological foundation. Hence to appreciate this path, the psychology of Yoga must first be understood. The most important element in the psychology of Yoga is Chitta. Chitta is the first modification of Prakriti in which there is the predominance of Sattva over rajas and tamas. It is material by nature, but due to the closest contact with the self it is enlightened by its light. It assumes the form of anything in whose contact it comes. Due to the modifications of the Chitta according to objects, the self knows these objects. According to Yogasutra, though there is no modification in the self, except as the reflection of the changing Chitta Vriattis (modifications of Chitta), there is an appearance of change in it, just as the moon reflected in the river seems to be moving. When true knowledge is attained, the self-ceases to see itself in these modifications of the Chitta and gets rid of attachment and aversion to the worldly pleasures and sufferings. This attachment and aversion is bondage. The only way to get rid of this bondage is to control the modification of the chitta. This control is the result of Yoga. In the words of Patanjali, "Yoga is the cessation of the modification of Chitta. (Yogah Chittavrittinirodha)."[11]

When we come to psychological components, it's a reality that **"**All psychological problems arise ultimately from a misapplication of the energy of consciousness. Instead of uniting with the eternal inner reality in which is lasting joy, we attach ourselves to transient external objects whose fluctuations bring pain. The practice of Yoga, or inner in integration, reserves all psychological problems by merging the mind back into its immutable source of pure consciousness, in which resides perfect pea e. For this reason, Yoga is an integral and important part of Ayurveda, the science of life, particularly for treating psychological disorders."[12]

The Yoga Sutra, "the main classical text on Yoga, defines Yoga as "the calming of the operations of consciousness." Again, the term for consciousness or mind is Chitta, referring to all conscious and unconscious thought potentials. Calming means eliminating all the negative

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conditionings lodged in the mind and heart. To achieve complete calm requires control of the different functions of consciousness through intelligence, mind and ego, along with detachment from the vital force and physical body, this is a deeper and more profound definition than the common idea of Yoga today, which may be little more than exercise or stress reliefs. The rules of yogic development, which can treat psychological imbalances as well, are:

1) Consciousness (Chitta) must be calmed and emptied.
2) Intelligence (Buddhi) must be reoriented and sharpened.
3) Mind (Manas) and senses must be controlled and internalized.
4) The (Ahankara) ego must be dissolved.
5) The vital-force (Prana) must be balanced and strengthened.
6) The body must be purified.

These different processes go together, without one the others cannot succeed.[13] We can find the same line of thought in Buddhism. The Buddha felt that it was imperative to cultivate right mindfulness for all aspects of life in order to see things as they really are, or in other words, to "stop and smell the roses." He encouraged keen attention and awareness of all things through the four foundations of mindfulness: 1. Contemplation of the body 2. Contemplation of feelings 3. Contemplation of states of mind 4. Contemplation of phenomena In a word, mindfulness is about experiencing the moment with an attitude of openness and freshness to all and every experience. Through right mindfulness, one can free oneself from passions and cravings, which so often make us prisoners of past regrets or future preoccupations.[14]

Right Concentration is a mental discipline that aims to transform your mind. As the core practice of "meditation," right concentration is a foundational activity within Buddhist thought and practice. According to Buddha, there are four stages of deeper concentration called Dhyana: 1) The first stage of concentration is one in which mental hindrances and impure intentions disappear and a sense of bliss is achieved. 2) In the second stage, activities of the mind come to an end and only bliss remains. 3) In the third stage, bliss itself begins to disappear. 4) In the final stage, all sensations including bliss disappear and are replaced by a total peace of mind, which Buddha described as a deeper sense of happiness.[15]

A human must try to reduce stress from his life and try to get happiness from all available resources. Stress less mind leads to a happy life. If we want to be happy always we must try to

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free ourself from all kinds of stresses and make a balance with stressful situations. The Practice of Yoga, via Asans, Pranayam, Dhayan etc. made us stress less and energizes our mind and heart. Even the Dalai Lama has said that in order to be a good person and a happy person, it's not necessary to practice Buddhism, or for that matter any religion. After all, neither is needed for virtuous states of mind such as kindness, love, respect for others and a desire to help them to arise. "It is these positive states of mind themselves that bring happiness to the individual and the people he or she engages with," says Lungtok. "Therefore as we're all seeking happiness, it makes sense to try to be as good as possible."[16] In our daily practice of refraining from thoughts, words, and actions that cause suffering, we can find support in adopting a commitment to core values that nurture and deepen our sense of internal and physical well-being. Here are ten values I find particularly beneficial to developing an enduring sense of well-being.

- Be truthful in what you say (wise speech) and speak with wise compassion.
- Be genuine and authentic. We so often protect the "false pride" of the ego or else "package ourselves" for acceptance, approval, or popularity and this is not a winning strategy for well-being.
- Be kind in all that you do and say.
- Be compassionate to those who are in pain and/or experiencing difficulty. Compassion is contingent on what's happening.
- Act and make choices in terms of relatedness. Know that you are part of something larger.
- Honor you own creativity. Pay attention to what you care about and align your outer priorities accordingly.
- Maintain a personalized life balance such that you primarily spend time on areas you care about. This requires that you know what matters to you and that be absolutely honest as to how you are spending your time and life energy.
- Continue to learn and grow (personally and/or professionally) at every stage of life.
- Be present in your life moment to moment.
- Take responsibility for your body and make choices that support your body's health and well-being. This includes choices in the areas of diet, exercise, sleep, relaxation, play, and health maintenance. [17]

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The main reason of our stress is our negative thinking to blame others and our environment for all our problems. Our thought process was not able to make a synthesis with others and with outer environment. All this creates harm our mental peace and also affects our social harmony. Our need of the day is to be in harmony with others and be in the flow of life. It is very important to live a happy life. Co-existence is the very basic characteristic of human race and if we start it from one to one correspondence then to the masses, it is very helpful to maintain our well-being and Yoga philosophy is the most relevant approach these days.

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